September 11, 2001. It seems such a regular day. My students are working hard. Mr. Parker says the World Trade Center has been attacked. I am 45 years of age and the memories of many terrors race through my mind. President Kennedy shot, Vietnam, and watching the Challenger explode with a classroom full of eighth graders. Now, what do I do with this new information? My mothering instinct kicks in- we are not stopping what we are doing until we absolutely must. Keep working, maybe it will all be a mistake. We are not under attack. Mr. Baratko informs the school and now the task of dealing with grief and fear begin. My “children” are now adults. Quickly “Pray for Miracles” appears on my board and no one is willing to erase it until the last day of school. Students say “this is why we need prayer in school”. We make it to the end of the day. A few students are laughing and playing around. The others, who wished they could hide their fears, are asking “how can you ignore the Pentagon, our symbol of national security being attacked, how can you be so rude?”

Day 2 is worse. Students need the TV on at all times. The fear is in their eyes. Maybe because I teach family related classes students feel more comfortable discussing their fears. The boys who are eighteen want to know if they will be able to finish high school before they go to war. Many want to enlist today. Is it safe to go to the mall? Wright Patt will be bombed first. When will we attack? Will we ever be safe again? People think that girls worry the most, but the boys are the most fearful and in need of counseling the most. They will give their lives.

The world is all quiet. I have never been in a world where there are no airplanes in the sky. No trail of vapors visible. It is a total quiet that is unexplainable. The time without air traffic is eerie and the most fearful. When a military plane flies over the fear of bombing is in our minds. It is only a sonic boom, not an attack. How do you deal with the wait? Unable to do anything?

Friday night – football. We are all fearful and numb, but as parents we know our kids need to get back to normal. Many of the kids need the release, and so do we. Am I proud? Yes. The kids are respectful, concerned for the lives of others and patriotic. Can we really understand? No, but the empathy is there and no one is afraid to show their emotions. There are many tears and cheers during the national anthem. Our flag at half staff.

Gradually the need for constant communication with the rest of the world fades and the flag is raised to show our strength. The media keep the survivors at the forefront and the horrendous pictures in our mind. I find that my mind keeps going to Pennsylvania not the World Trade Center. They are true heroes. They kept our country whole and prevented total devastation. Our Capitol is still safe.

September 11, 2002. Today the tears have returned. I cannot stop them and hopefully, others are not blocking their feelings either. My tears are not for the dead, but for their families, the future of our world and our loss of innocence. The dead have life everlasting, but the survivors have fears and memories that will affect every day of their lives.

Do I want retribution? The days for retribution are over now for me. The need to secure our freedoms is now paramount. Do not take away the freedoms we are blessed to have in the United States because of fear. Fight instead for our way of life. Love your family. Love life. Let freedom ring.

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